




VILLE DE LYON

BIBLIOTHEQUE DE LA VILLE DE LYON

Description of the Illuminated Calendar, Copied from the Hours of Anne of Brittany.

“he Hours of Anne of Brittany” is a magnificent prayer book preserved in the Bibliothèque Royale of Paris. This splendid work, of handsome quarto size, commences with a beautiful Calendar, executed in body colour in the finest style of miniature painting of the period. Each subject occupies an entire page, with the exception of the tablet in the centre of the picture, which contains a portion of the Saints’ days of the Roman Calendar, the other portion on the opposite page being ornamented only with a border, representing a flower, evidently painted from nature, on a gold ground. Hence it will be seen that, with the exception of the adaptation of the Almanack to 1845, the present work is exactly copied from the original. The remainder of the manuscript volume contains prayers to all the principal saints, with a finely executed miniature, occupying an entire page, taken from the legend of each particular saint. Some of the prayers opposite to these pictures are ornamented with borders similar to those of the Calendar, whilst others are entirely framed in borders of richer character, of which that on our title page is a good, though not one of the most elaborate specimens. Other prayers and offices are similarly enriched, and in all there are upwards of three hundred plants portrayed, the whole of them executed with great beauty, and with sufficient fidelity, to render the volume the most complete herbal of the period. The subjects which form the illustration of each month are exceedingly happy. Thus, for the bleak month of January we find a snow storm, with a traveller seeking shelter in a building, where, from the preparations seen going on,

his reception will evidently be hospitable : the upper part of the picture, as in all the others, is occupied by the sign of the zodiac, which is well detached by its purely decorative treatment. In February we have the in-door comforts of home and shelter illustrated, which by a bold section,—a common device of illuminators,—is made to contrast strikingly with the frigid and snow-covered exterior. March exhibits the earliest field occupation—A man is engaged pruning the trees of an orchard, while a young woman collects the croppings for firewood ; and in the back ground, knights in armour are seen issuing from the gates of a castle. These elaborately drawn castles are not the least interesting portion of the volume. We still admire the crumbling ruins on the vine clad hills of the Rhine, and the more undulating banks of the Loire or Garonne ; but here we see them exhibited in all their original perfection, sketched by a contemporary artist. In April, spring has already her enamelled carpet of flowers, and the fair chatelaine is enjoying her lofty flower garden on the castle terrace, accompanied by female attendants, who present her with chaplets. The month of May is treated with peculiar elegance, the zodiacal sign of the Twins being beautifully reproduced in the picture by twin brothers returning from gathering the May or hawthorn flowers. June exhibits the hay-cutting, and the two mowers are so naturally treated, that one may almost hear the rural sound of scythe whetting, and feel the dewy freshness of a bright June morning. July represents the harvest. August brings the winnowing of the grain ; September the vintage. October exhibits the sower, and the landscape portion of this subject is among the most successful ; the mill-pool with its sedge banks, and the swans, doubled by their reflections on its glassy surface, are beautiful realities which the illuminator has fully appreciated, and has treated with

an excellence seldom attained even by the great masters of the period. In November, the swine-herd conducts his drove to the oak wood, where they are feasting and fattening upon the falling crop of acorns. December represents a scene in the preparations for the good cheer of Christmas—one pig is already prepared, and another is held down by the nervous arm of a resolute housewife to receive the knife, while a girl stirs the blood destined for the black puddings, one of the favourite delicacies of our forefathers.

The work was probably executed about the year 1499, on the occasion of the marriage of Anne with her second husband, Louis the Twelfth.

Anne of Brittany, only daughter and heiress of Francis the Second, Duke of Brittany, was born in the year 1476, and losing her father at the age of fourteen, became, with such a dowry as the duchy of Brittany, an object of contention among many powerful suitors. Eventually she gave her hand to Maximilian, the King of the Romans, to whom she had been affianced by her father, and the marriage was secretly performed, by proxy, with the customary ridiculous ceremony. Meanwhile the celebrated Count Dunois, frustrated in his endeavour to obtain her hand for his patron and friend the Duke of Orleans, then a state prisoner, resolved at all hazards to annex the duchy of Brittany to the crown of France; and having gained the consent of his master, Charles the Eighth, to open negotiations for her marriage with that Prince, he, by dint of threats and artifices, at last gained his point, and Anne of Brittany became Queen of France in 1491. On the death of Charles, in 1498, she was at first overwhelmed with grief; but rousing herself from her despondency, she hastened to Brittany, where she resumed the exercise of her hereditary sovereignty, and in less than four months the young and charming

widow gave her hand to Louis the Twelfth, who, when Duke of Orleans, had been one of her suitors; thus becoming a second time Queen of France.

Her court, which was remarkable for its splendour, was frequented by many young ladies of quality, both French and Breton, whose education and deportment she directed by precept and example; and it is a remarkable fact, that these ladies were the first termed "Maids of honour." She is said to have been the first Queen to adopt black as mourning on the death of her first husband; white having been the royal mourning previously to her time.

The present is an attempt to render mechanism an auxiliary of art, as far as it is now practicable, and to point the way to greater and higher efforts. The flower borders are printed entirely by the lithographic press of Mr. Owen Jones, and it is believed are excellent specimens of that delicate process. The figure subjects are coloured by hand.

This volume will answer every purpose of the usual Almanacks, and "The Diary" will furnish the means of recording interesting occurrences and home events, which being registered in a volume of intrinsic worth, will thus form a more permanent record than the usual pages of Diaries and Almanacks.

* * It is intended to publish annually a volume of similar character.

January

Diary

Ble agrifolium



Vingnetier

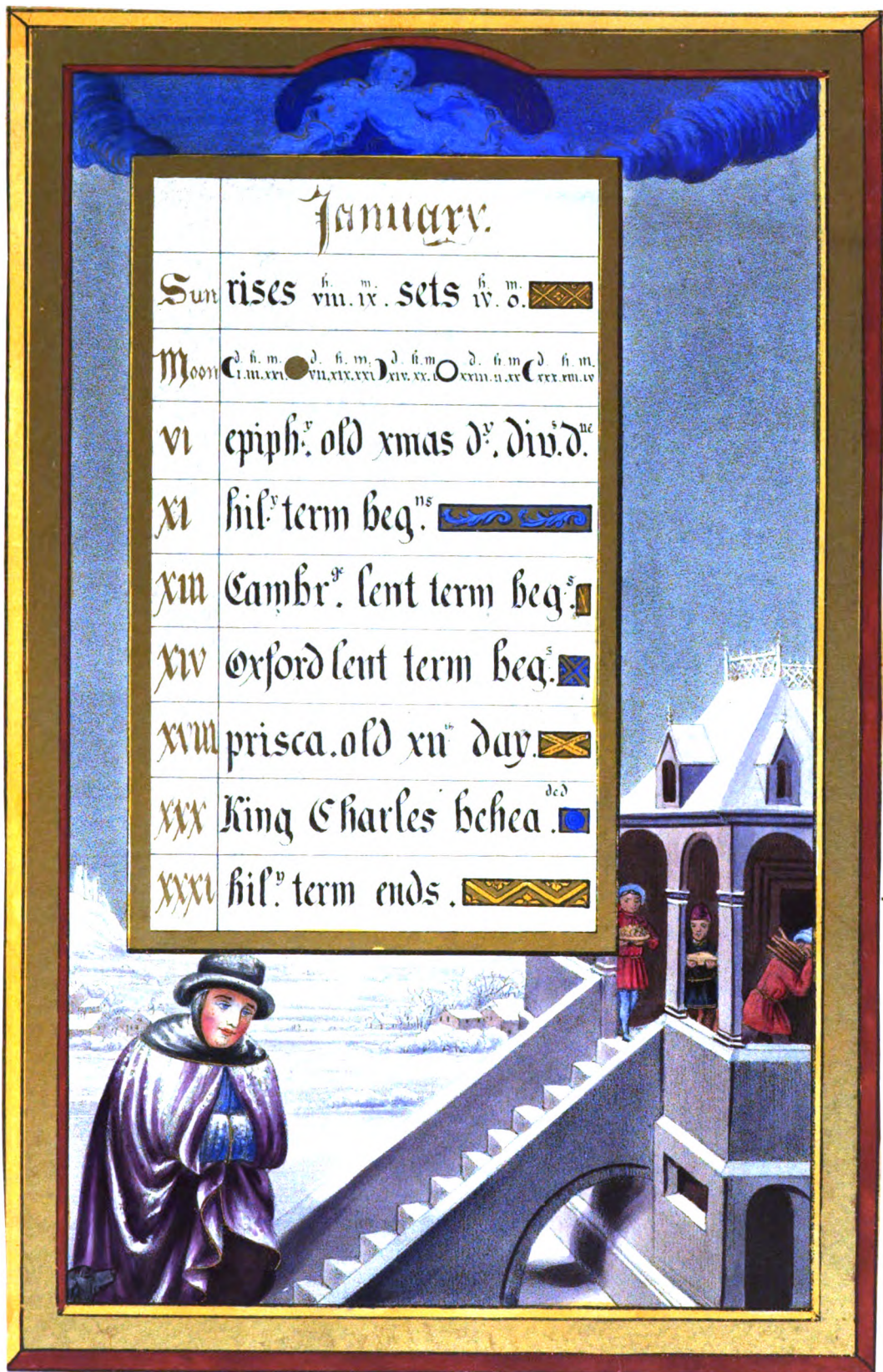
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January

Diary



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February.

Diary.



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VILLE DE LYON
BIBLIOTHÈQUE DES ARTS

February

Diary

A detailed illustration of a plant with a thick, reddish-brown stem and several green, serrated leaves. The plant has several dark red, daisy-like flowers with prominent yellow centers. A small, dark beetle is visible on the lower right side of the stem.

Grosse testes



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march

Diary



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march

Diary

Specie cardo



Garoffle

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april

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april Diary

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May Diary



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May Diary.

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June Diary



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June Diary.



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July

diary.

Epe tripholium



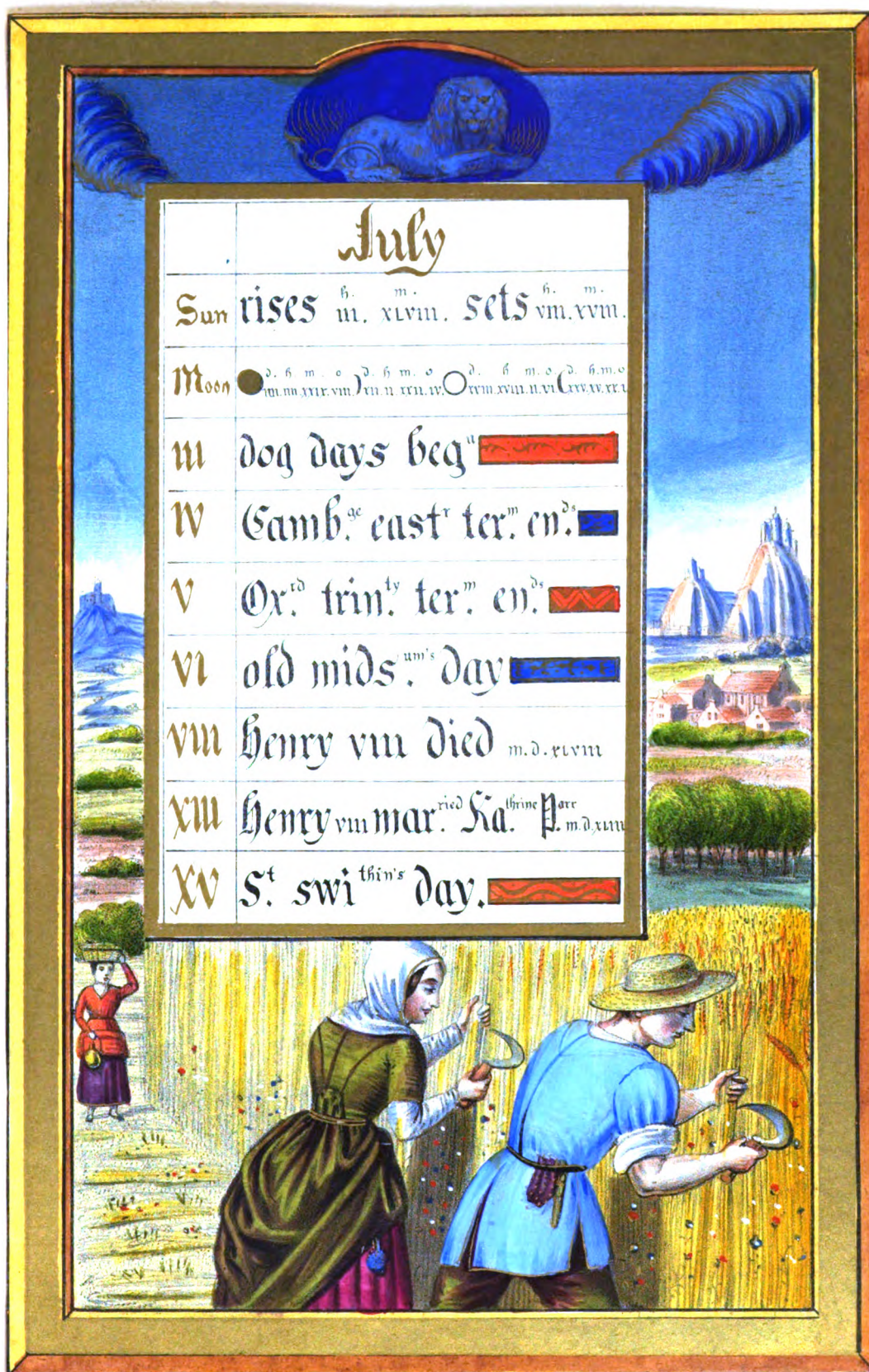
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August diary.



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September

Diary



September

Diary.



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October

Diary



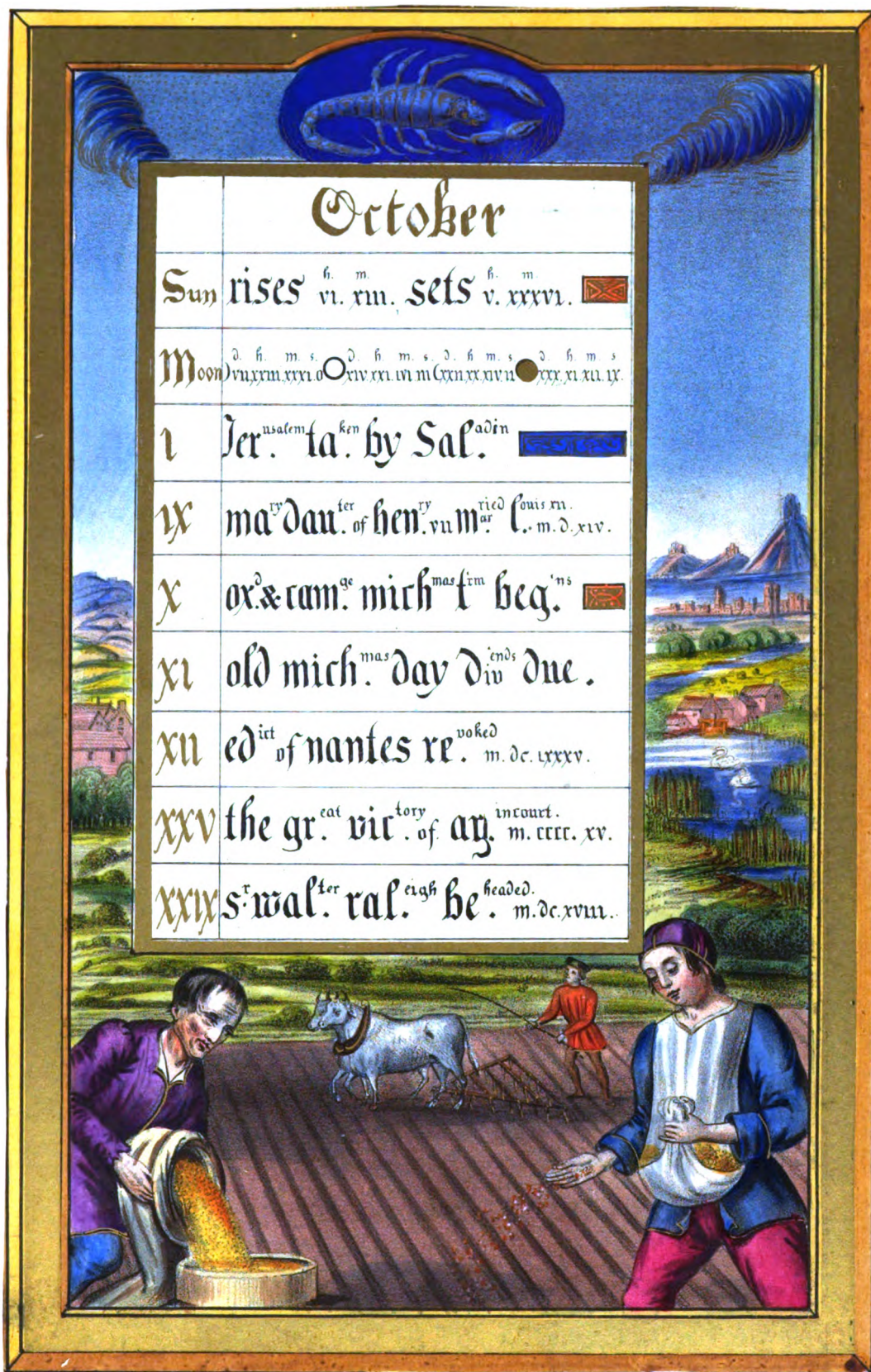
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October.

Diary



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november

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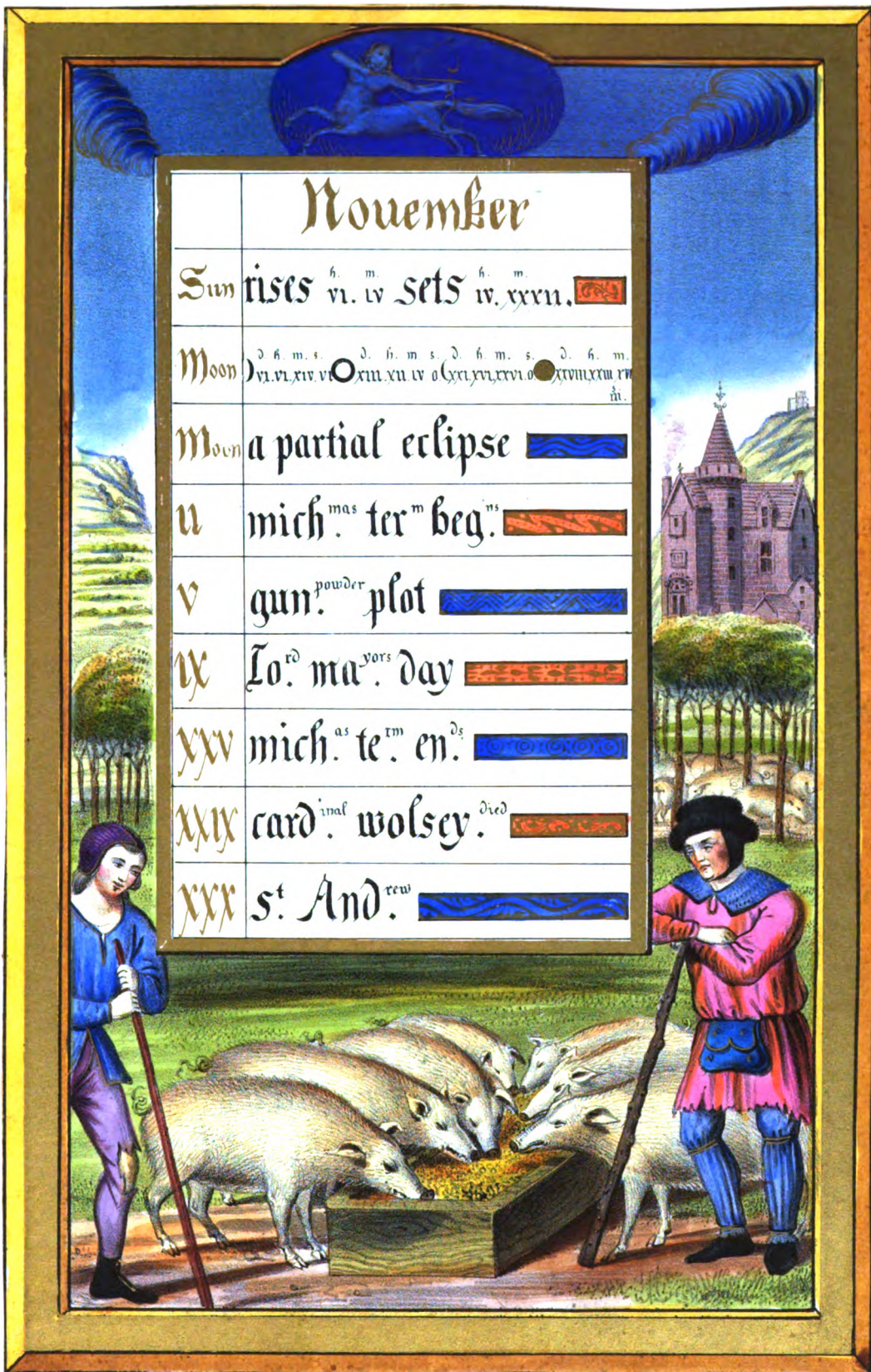
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november

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December

diary



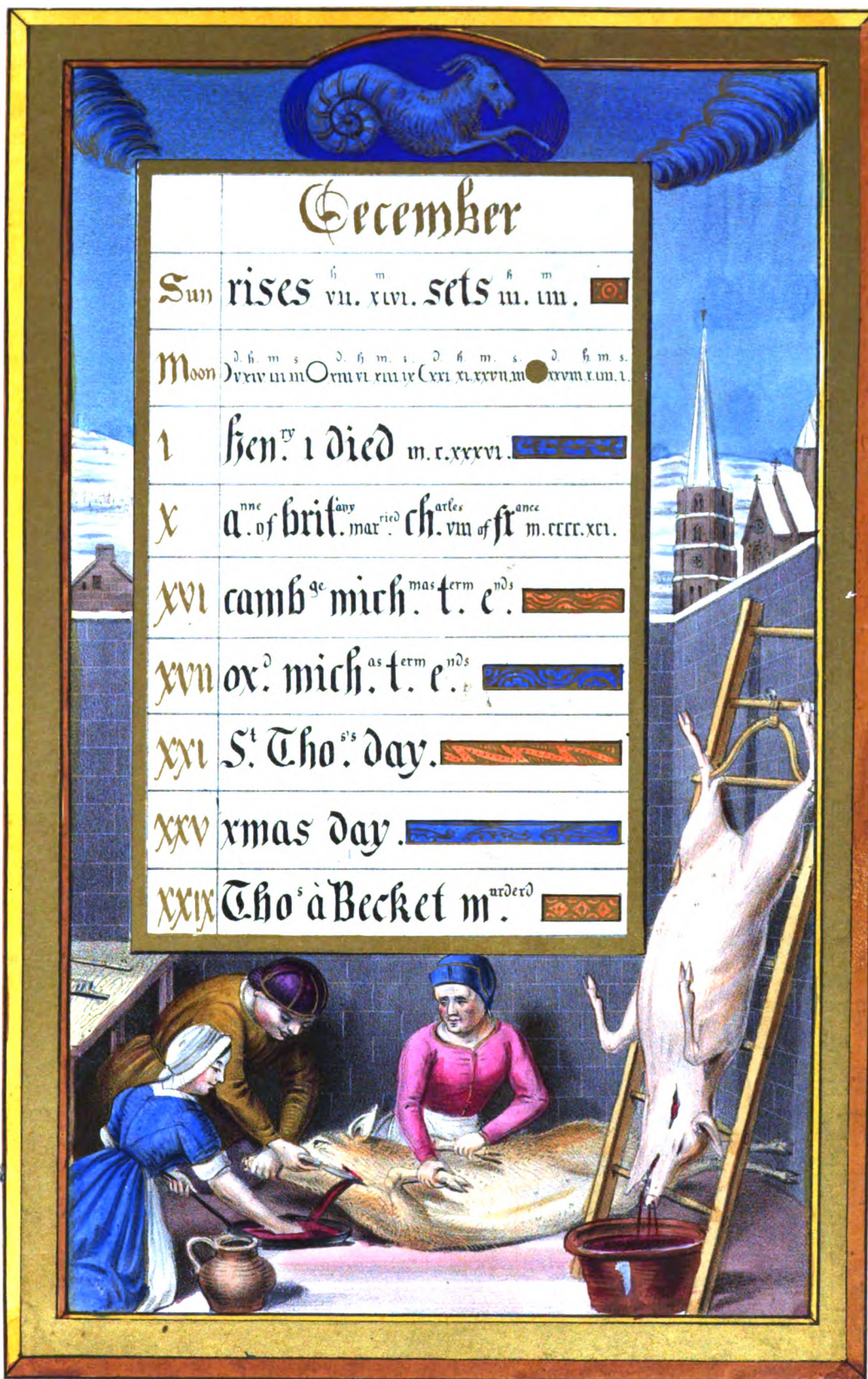
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December

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Illuminated Books

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Many works have recently exhibited the Architectural wonders of those ages that have been misnamed “dark”:—the profuse sculpture of the vast cathedrals—the massive grandeur of the feudal castles—the more recent magnificence of the Tudor and Elizabethan mansions, the châteaux of France, and palaces of Italy; but in all those delineations, the works of the earlier periods have been necessarily stripped of the charm of colour,—their salient feature,—as well as their painting, gilding, tapestry,—of all, in short, which imparted to them the finishing touch of splendour, and the peculiar impress of art in each successive phase of its progress; for those elaborate and beautiful efforts of artistic skill of the early portion of the middle ages have nearly all perished by barbarism or puritanical fanaticism, even where time had spared them. And yet, monuments of those branches of early art are not entirely lost to us; for examples of the style and taste of each period are vividly preserved in the splendid Illuminated MSS. of each succeeding era, which, in fact, contain the only records of the early history of modern painting, and yet lie buried in the great libraries of Europe, utterly inaccessible to thousands fully capable of appreciating their interest and beauty.

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